



Brownfields Initiatives in Region 2

Office of Outreach and Special Projects (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Currently, there are a number of Regionally funded Brownfields-related activities, such as targeted site assessments in urban areas, financial support of State voluntary cleanup programs, financial support of State regulation development, Inter-governmental Personnel Assignments (IPA) to cities, and outreach activities. Some of these activities are in the form of Regional or National pilots, while others are smaller scale actions such as prospective purchaser agreements. This fact sheet is one in a series of ten which outline Brownfields-related activities occurring in each of the ten Regions.

OVERVIEW

The Region 2 Superfund program has focused significant attention and resources on promoting and facilitating Brownfields remediation and redevelopment. The Regional Brownfields initiative is an organized commitment to help communities revitalize and redevelop abandoned or under-utilized potentially contaminated industrial and commercial properties. Region 2 recognizes that it needs to play an important though not central role in redevelopment, and has taken a broad, multifaceted approach in providing assistance and support. By acting as a catalyst to identify resources, broker the involvement of critical stakeholders, and proactively solicit community participation, the Region can most effectively utilize its resources.

OBJECTIVES

As part of its Brownfields strategy, Region 2 will encourage the development of local Brownfields redevelopment initiatives and concentrate its resources on the following objectives:

- Providing a forum for community concerns;
- Marshalling State and city agencies to identify sites and develop infrastructures;

- Assisting businesses by identifying obstacles to redevelopment, particularly environmental issues;
- Establishing liaisons with local authorities and economic development corporations;
- Investigating existing assistance efforts and making information available to developers;
- Interpreting environmental rules and regulations for stakeholders;
- Facilitating environmental evaluations by expediting administrative processes;
- Developing public education materials about environmental contamination issues and health risks as they relate to local redevelopment efforts; and
- Offering technical assistance to local planning commissions.

This level of Regional involvement will encourage greatly needed additional capital and the development of innovative approaches toward redevelopment in under-utilized, distressed urban communities.

PARTNERSHIPS

EPA Region 2 has funded the EPA Northeast Hazardous Substance Research Center (NHSRC) to conduct activities that will contribute to and advance the Regional Brownfields strategy. NHSRC is a consortium of seven universities involved with education, research, and community outreach on hazardous materials and associated problems. NHSRC conducted seven workshops at various locations in the Region (Buffalo, Newark, New York City, and Puerto Rico). Information on barriers to brownfields redevelopment was gathered during the workshops and will be used to provide input for a Brownfields Reference Document. The Reference Document will provide an analytical framework and various resources to assist stakeholders in the assessment, planning, and implementation of Brownfields projects. Information gathered during the workshops will also be used to produce a report (white paper) on the financial barriers to brownfields redevelopment and possible solutions to those barriers. On February 26, 1996, Region 2 will sponsor a Regional Forum designed to find additional solutions to the barriers identified in the workshops.

The Northeast Midwest Institute for Regional Policy will collaborate with NHSRC by participating in the workshops and at the Regional Forum.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The Region 2 Brownfields Strategy plans to leverage the expertise and knowledge gained through the Brownfields workshops and Forum, the participation of the Northeast Midwest Institute, and an in-depth study conducted by Columbia University in Spring, 1994. Specifically, through implementation of its Strategy, Region 2 will:

- Expand the knowledge base relating to the key elements for successful brownfields redevelopment on a Regional and site-specific basis;
- Develop guidance materials for local, State, and EPA use in developing and implementing Brownfields programs;
- Identify and recommend solutions for Brownfields program barriers; and

- Perform outreach activities to disseminate information and assist communities involved in Brownfields activities.

Guidance materials and specific information on Brownfields barriers and solutions will be developed for and distributed to communities, mainly through the Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) program, which is an ongoing project of the NHSRC. The TOSC program emphasizes helping communities with economic development and addressing environmental justice issues. Additionally, informal meetings and presentations will be held to educate communities on pertinent brownfields-related issues. Through this partnership, Region 2 is involved in projects in Trenton, Jersey City, Newark, Camden, and Puerto Rico.

PILOTS

EPA selected the Cities of Rochester, New York and Trenton, New Jersey for Brownfields pilots in July 1995, and New York City for a Brownfields pilot in January 1996. Also in July 1995, Region 2 selected Buffalo, New York to receive a Regional Pilot. Rochester's Brownfields pilot seeks to eliminate the current bias against urban brownfields by correcting misconceptions about redevelopment and growth. Trenton's Brownfields pilot seeks to integrate environmental, technical, marketing, and financial resources to develop a comprehensive strategy for Brownfields assessment, cleanup, and reuse. New York City's Brownfields pilot seeks to mobilize a public/private task force to develop new approaches and performance measures that will accelerate the redevelopment of sites. Buffalo's activities include inventorying and characterizing the city's brownfields; and finalizing development strategies for two to five Brownfields redevelopment projects based on community vision, economic development potential, and health and environmental concerns.

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